

ELLIE HOLCOMB



FIGHTING
WORDS



100 DAYS OF
SPEAKING TRUTH INTO
THE DARKNESS



DEVOTIONAL



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Printed in China

978-1-0877-4779-8

Published by B&H Publishing Group
Nashville, Tennessee

Dewey Decimal Classification: 242.643
Subject Heading: DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE
/ WOMEN / CHRISTIAN LIFE

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Cover Design and Illustrations by Ligia Teodosiu.
Author photo by Ashtin Paige.

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*For my three children.
You are dearly loved.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Annie, my fighting words friend, it has been a joy to kick back at the shadows with you all these years.

Sam, you know me, you fight for me, and you fought to make this book a reality. Thank you for your vision, tenacity, and constant support. You and your team literally make my dreams come true.

Ashley, my editor and newfound friend, you heard my heart and helped me speak it well. Thank you.

Mom, you have prayed God's Word over me and my siblings for as long as I can remember. Thank you. I treasure God's Word because I saw you treasure it first. Mom and Nancy, thank you both for living authentically head over heels for Jesus right in front of me.

My Bible study gals, thank you for delighting in God's promises with me all these years. I know Him more because I know each of you.

Drew, you breathe courage into me and help me remember what's true on the days I forget. I'm forever grateful for you.

To Maddie and our team of caretakers, thank you for loving us by loving our children so well.

To my precious friends and family, thank you for doing life with me and for all the ways each of you point me to Jesus.

To my Fighting Words Friday community, thank you for joining me on the journey of holding on to the truth for all these years and for reminding me regularly that none of us do this life alone.

INTRODUCTION

There are some stories that change your life. This is one of them for me.

Thirteen years ago, I was sitting across the table from a friend of mine who battles depression. As I listened to this friend share her heart with me, I was struck by how many lies she was believing.

Lies about who she was.

Lies about who God was.

Lies about how He loved us.

And the more I listened to her talk, the more I realized that there were so many lies I was believing too . . .

All of the sudden, my heart was pounding in my chest. I started to get angry because I remembered that there is an enemy, and he's called the father of lies (John 8:44). What does that mean? It means that when he speaks, lies are his native language—that *punk*.

I remember sitting there with my friend and thinking, "I am so sick of the enemy stealing our joy, our peace, our hope, our John 10:10 'life to the full' that God came to offer us, and I am *not* going down without a fight! God calls His Word a sword, and we're gonna use it!"

In that moment, I realized that it might not be enough to just acknowledge the lies we so often believe. More than that, we desperately needed to ground ourselves in the *truth*.

I grabbed my Bible and did what sometimes you do when you feel desperate for truth: I started flipping through the pages looking for *anything* I had ever underlined before because I thought, "If I underlined it at some point, it must be good!" I remember almost shouting at my friend as I frantically flipped through my Bible, "WRITE THESE DOWN!"

It all makes me laugh now, because I was being awfully bossy, but my friend scribbled down the reference to every verse I spoke. I remember saying, "We are gonna start memorizing these verses together. These are gonna be our *fighting words*, and we're going

to use 'em when the enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy. We're gonna kick back at the darkness with the light."

So we started memorizing Scripture, and truth be told, we're not very good at it. (Insert cry-laughing face here.) But I can tell you this for sure: God's Word changed us. It didn't necessarily change our circumstances, but it changed us from the inside out because it gave us solid ground to stand on when the shame storms started rolling in. It was a shelter and a shield and an anchor and a light and a balm and a song that we began to sing into the shadows. We realized that God isn't lying when He says that His Word is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. He isn't blowing smoke when He says that just like the rains that fall from the heavens don't return to the heavens until they cause the earth to bud and flourish, so is the word that goes out of His mouth. It *will* accomplish the purposes for which He sent it (Isa. 55:10-11). Y'all! That is a PROMISE, and I dare you to believe it. It will change your life. It's for sure changed mine.

I won't pretend to understand it all. God's Word is confounding and mysterious to me at times, but it also tells the most beautiful story I know: the story of a lowly God-man who entered our mess of a world so that we could know we're *never* alone and that our brokenness and suffering never have the final word. The story of a God who loves us enough to not leave us as we are, and who invites us into being a part of something much bigger than ourselves . . . a kingdom that's coming. At the end of the day, even though I don't always understand everything in the Bible, what I have experienced is this: God's Word is alive, and it's brought me to life over and over again, which is what brings us here.

I don't know how this book got into your hands. I don't know where you are on the journey. Maybe you're struggling through a season of dreams that didn't come true. Maybe you're battling depression yourself or someone you love is deeply hurting. Maybe you are weary and wounded and angry that God hasn't seemed to follow through for you. Maybe you're just busy and tired of moving aimlessly from thing to thing on your to-do list. Maybe you feel burnt out or burned by the church. Maybe you feel trapped, or maybe you just want more than what you've experienced with God and with this life that so often breaks your heart. Maybe you're a mom with young kids and you love them, but you feel like you've lost yourself as you've

cared for them. Maybe you want to be a mom but can't get pregnant. Maybe you are exhausted. Maybe you're lonely. Maybe you just want some truth to help get you through your crazy day.

Whoever you are and wherever you're coming from, I'm so glad you're here. These pages hold my fighting words. They hold the promises of God that I have clung to over the years, that have grounded me when I felt lost, and that have filled me with hope when I felt hopeless.

I hope you'll pick up these verses and hold onto them with all you've got.

I hope you'll use them to kick back at the shadows with the light.

I hope you'll let the promises on these pages sink deep into your heart.

I hope you'll have the courage to memorize a few of them with me, so that no matter where you are, you'll have the truth to cover, guide, and comfort.

I hope that these verses will become your fighting words, and that we'll all start walking right up to the darkness in our own hearts and in the weary world around us to speak God's love and light and truth.

I can't wait to see how God shows up for you, to hear how His Word leads, consoles, calms, heals, and transforms you. Maybe I'll meet you someday and get to hear stories of how you've found fighting words of your own, and how they've helped remind you that there's hope for sure, and that you have a God who loves you, cherishes you, and helps you fight the good fight.

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

JOHN 8:32

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

Dear Fellow Sojourner,

This is the part of the book where I look you in the eyes. Pretend we're in my kitchen . . . this is where all my favorite conversations happen. We also have good coffee in hand. You also look great. Okay, here's my pep talk/what I want to say: I love you.

This book you're holding? It isn't really a book. It's an invitation. I'm inviting you to join me for a 100-day journey of anchoring down in the promises of God. Here's the game plan. I'm feeling like a coach today, so I've got 3 P's for you:

PROMISES

These pages hold 100 different verses and promises of God that have grounded me over the years. I've printed them out for you on every day so you can return to them again and again. We'll hold onto these truths together.

PROCESS AND PRAY

I'll process how each verse has encouraged, transformed, or comforted me, but I've included questions to invite you into the processing. In my mind, the main content of this book is God's Word—and YOUR HEART! God's Word is alive, but He also gives us a Guide, the Holy Spirit, whose role is to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). I hope you'll take time to really process these promises of God, whether that looks like prayer, journaling, pouring out your heart, or writing out the truth so you can come back to it for perspective when the lies start creeping in. I encourage you to invite the Spirit to lead you on this journey as He instills these truths down deep in your heart, like a balm to the places that need healing, like light to the places that are covered up in shadows. (Also . . . I'm not the boss of you, but I'd encourage you to have a journal at the ready so you can engage with God's Word as you're reading through and keep a record of all the good things He is showing you!)

PERMANENCE

You'll find ten pages in this book with verses beautifully printed on them. These are ten different invitations to Scripture memorization. God's Word is a treasure, and I want to invite you to bury some of it in your heart. Don't feel like you have to memorize these perfectly, but what might happen if you simply made an effort to try? I left a space next to each of these verses for you to write down the stories of how that specific promise has brought life and light to your life as you commit it to memory. It's like you'll have a permanent supply of light and hope to reach for, even through your darkest nights. (I'd also like to add here in a whisper that it has helped me so much to memorize Scripture in the context of community. Ask a friend to join you in the memorizing . . . that way you've got some accountability and someone to share the wonderful stories of how God uses this verse for flourishing in your life. I think this makes the whole process even more fun.)

I've got one last note before we dive into this adventure together. You may not know this, but I'm a musician. You'll find in this devotional that I end up quoting or referencing my own songs a lot. I hope you know that I only do that because my songs are like journals that chronicle my wrestling with God, my deepest aches, my darkest doubts, and the ways that I've tried to let the truth shine light into those weary and wounded places in my own story. So if I reference my own song, please know I'm not trying to sell you anything or say that my music is something you need in your life. I'm simply saying that I needed to write, sing, pray, or believe it for myself. Don't get me wrong, I always hope the songs I write will be sweet reminders of God's truth to all who hear them, including you; but I just need you to know I'm not trying to get you to buy my records. When I make connections to songs I've written, I'm wanting to connect you to the way God has used His Word to revive my heart again and again.

I can't wait to hear all the stories of how God shows up as you invite the Spirit to be your guide and steep your soul in God's living Word! If you could see me now, I'd be beaming . . . eyes lit up with the kind of excitement that comes when you know something good is in store.

Blessings on the journey.

Love, Ellie

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7 CSB

I love this promise from God's Word, but the command "Rejoice in the Lord always" can sometimes feel cruel in light of some of the pain and suffering life can throw at us. There are times when I wonder, "I'm supposed to rejoice in the middle of this mess?! I don't feel like rejoicing. I feel like weeping." But then crashing into that command to rejoice is one of the sweetest promises of all: "The Lord is near."

The nearness of God has been a balm to my weary and wounded soul over and over again, and when I remember that God promises He'll be near me always, I don't have to worry, and I always have a reason to sing and to rejoice. In fact, this is the verse that inspired "Find You Here," the song I wrote in the wake of my dad's cancer diagnosis.

Nobody is ever ready for that call. A week after receiving that very scary news, my mom and dad had a worship night at their house. I'll never forget it. I stood at the edge of the room that night, almost frozen in fear, but as I watched my mom and dad run into all the darkness and all the unknown ahead of them on this cancer journey with their hands raised in the air, praising God, the invitation to join them was almost irresistible. I ended up in the middle of the room praising God right beside them, and we encountered the peace and

the presence of God that night in a way that will mark me forever. We didn't have any answers or guarantees about my dad's health. But we had peace. The Lord was near. I wrote these words to "Find You Here" the next day:

It's not the news that any of us hoped that we would hear

*It's not the road we would have chosen
The only thing that we can see is darkness up ahead,
But You're asking us to lay our worries
down and sing a song instead*


And I didn't know I'd find You here

*In the middle of my deepest fear
But You are drawing near, You are overwhelming me with peace*

My dad is now cancer-free, and we're all so grateful, but I know my parents would have me say two things in light of their story: 1) Not all hard stories end this way (My family knows this well even in our own family history outside of my dad's journey.); and 2) There are no guarantees except for the faithfulness and love of Jesus, which has seen us through all the way to the cross and beyond into resurrection life that is waiting for us on the other side. Because we have that, we can look suffering dead in the eye and say, "I see you, but because of who Jesus is and because of what He did on the cross and because He walked out of the grave, you do not get the final word. Love wins in the end, and this is why we can 'rejoice always.' This is why we've always got a reason to sing."

I'm so grateful that God's promises are not only true today and every day for us, but they infuse us with the strength we need to keep rejoicing right in the face of our worries. We may be tempted to believe the lies that God isn't with us, that worrying will do more than approaching Him in prayer, that joy just isn't possible in this place. But here's the truth: *God is near*. He promises that, and in His presence, as we lay our needs and heart before Him, we can have both joy and peace. We really can. Lord, may Your nearness grant us peace and joy in the most unexpected places, even today.

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- What circumstances in your life make it difficult to “rejoice always”?
 - Have you ever experienced a peace or nearness from God that was unexplainable to your friends and family? What was that like?
 - I’ve heard Beth Moore say that these verses are like God’s prescription for peace. Take some time and write down the opposite of this truth. (For example, you could start off with “Complain in the Lord always. I will say it again: Complain!”) After you do this, take inventory. Does your life look like you are taking a prescription for peace or for anxiety?

 Father, I pray You’ll grant me trust that You are near me in the midst of my worries, give me courage to present my needs and heart before You in total honesty, and infuse me with a deep gratitude that shifts my perspective in a drastic way. I thank You for the promise of peace that will come when I choose to rejoice in who You are no matter what I face.

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS.

I WILL SAY IT AGAIN: REJOICE!

LET YOUR GENTLENESS BE EVIDENT TO ALL.

THE LORD IS NEAR.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING,
BUT IN EVERYTHING, THROUGH

PRAYER & PETITION

WITH THANKSGIVING

PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS TO GOD.

AND THE PEACE OF GOD,

WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL

GUARD YOUR HEARTS & MINDS

IN CHRIST JESUS.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7 CSB

